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Letter dated 20 June 2017 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit to you the attached letter from Riad Hijab, Head Coordinator of the High Negotiations Committee, dated 8 June 2017 (see annex).

I would be most grateful if you would circulate the present letter and its annex as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Peter **Wilson**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

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Annex to the letter dated 20 June 2017 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

[Original: Arabic]

On behalf of the High Negotiations Committee of the Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces, it is with profound concern that I draw your attention to the latest military escalation by the Assad regime and its Iranian allies and their sectarian militias in Dar'a in southern Syria.

Since the start of June, Syrian regime forces, supported by Iranian militias operating under air cover provided by the regime's allies, have intensified their indiscriminate attacks against civilians throughout Syria, with Dar'a governorate bearing the brunt of those attacks. Information documented by activists on the ground indicates that, in the past five days alone, the Assad regime has dropped at least 147 barrel bombs, conducted 65 air raids and fired 150 artillery shells and 160 "elephant" rockets in Dar'a and its countryside. In its most recent attack against civilians, the regime, with the support of its allies, continued to implement its military strategy with impunity. In fact, at the end of last week, additional forces belonging to Hizbullah and other Iranian-supported militias joined regime forces in Manshiyah and Dar'a al-Balad, in order to support the attack.

According to documented information provided by the Syrian Network for Human Rights, dozens of civilians have been killed as a result of the regime's escalation. On 1 June, two explosive charges planted by the regime killed at least 16 persons on the Kafr Shams-Aqraba road, Dar'a governorate. On that same day, regime helicopters dropped barrel bombs on the Dar'a refugee camp, killing civilians, including children. On 5 June, air strikes carried out by the regime and its allies on the town of Tafas, Dar'a governorate, killed 12 persons, including three children. On 4 June, regime warplanes killed six civilians in various governorates of Syria, including two women in Ghariyah al-Gharbiyah town, Dar'a governorate.

The indiscriminate violence being committed by the regime in Dar'a and other parts of Syria not only violates numerous Security Council resolutions, including resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014), 2254 (2015), 2258 (2015) and 2332 (2016), but also threatens the credibility of international efforts to halt the violence, including in the recently proposed de-escalation zones. Moreover, the attack against Dar'a raises serious questions as to the negative role played by Iran in relation to the de-escalation zones agreement. It is clear that the regime will, without hesitation, continue its efforts to impose a military solution and impede international efforts in support of the political process unless the de-escalation zones are implemented in an impartial and credible manner, and sanctions are put in place that can be imposed on the regime and its allies should they violate agreement.

The High Negotiations Committee of the Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces therefore calls on the Security Council to:

- Establish an impartial mechanism to monitor de-escalation zones across Syria. The United Nations must play a prominent role in monitoring implementation of the agreement, because the violators thereof cannot be trusted to monitor it;
- Deter future indiscriminate attacks against civilians by imposing credible sanctions against the perpetrators thereof;

- Develop options to ensure immediate accountability for violations of international law, including the establishment of a special tribunal within the framework of the General Assembly, as such tribunals have proven their credibility, in order to work towards justice and accountability in Syria.

The regime has repeatedly proven that it will not abandon its military strategies and participate seriously in negotiations unless it is forced to do so. We look to the members of the Security Council and the General Assembly, individually and collectively, to demonstrate the leadership required for ensuring a credible political process. You can accomplish this by, first of all, protecting civilians on the ground and by bringing your influence to bear on the regime and its allies in the political discussions at Geneva. The Syrian people are counting on you to protect their aspirations for the Syria of the future.

(*Signed*) Riad **Hijab**
General Coordinator
High Negotiations Committee
of the Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces